NUMB. X.

The Prompter.

To be Continued TUESDAYS and FRIDAYS.

O, Tragedy! UNHAPPY Tragedy! — *Thou, whoſe Chief End it was, to mourn the Miſeries of* others; — NOW, weep Thy own.

Poree's Oration.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13. 1734.

WHEN the *Thoughts* of a Woman are *deprav'd*, Her Heart *degenerates* from its natural Modeſty, and aſſumes a *Diſreliſh* of Every Thing that excites *Reflection*. It is the ſame Caſe exactly with a PEOPLE. — When Corruption is become *Epidemic*, The Publick Taſte muſt, of Conſequence, be *vitiated*; and an infamous Abhorrence of *Reaſonable Entertainments* will make way for ſuch ignobler ones, only, wherein the *Body* monopolizes Delight, and the *Soul* has no Part in the Pleaſure.

WHERE the Genius of a Nation is Noble, Warlike, and Liberal, there, *Paſſion* will poſſeſs the *Theatres*; The Scene will glow with Greatneſs, and *reflect* the Spirit of the *Audience*: — Love, Anger, Glory, Grief, Ambition, Pity, and Calamities, will, there, engroſs Attention; and the *Heart*, catching Influence, from the *Ear*, neither *taſte* Scenes, nor *pardon* them, unleſs they are *animated*, or *Inſtructive*.

IN a Nation, on the contrary, which is declineing to its *Period*; where Avarice ſupplants Ambition; and Depravity makes Dullneſs *Impudent*; where the Men abandon Shame, and the Women laugh at Modeſty; *There*, the STAGE, will be the firſt, to *feel*, and *manifeſt*, the Infection. — The Muſick will be looſe, unpaſſion'd, and Effeminate: The Tragic, and the Comic, Energy, will *dwindle* into Lightneſs, and Buffoonery: — The *Dancers* will depoſe the *Heroes*; and the Theatre no longer be conſider'd, as the *School* of *Wiſdom*, or of *Satire*, but as a Place of General Rendezvous; where Fools encourage Fools; where Faſhion vies with Faſhion; and Immodeſty, compares itſelf, and is ſupported by, Immodeſty.

I look'd-in, a few Days ſince, at a *new Tragedy*, the Firſt Adventure of Good-ſenſe this Seaſon, upon our Ocean of Impertinence! — I have never ſeen this Play; but had been told, The *French* beſtow'd Original, and Approbation, on it, tho' a *ſerious* Piece: I therefore thought it could not fail to ſtir our *Clods*, to ſome faint Openings of Curioſity; and went, in comfortable Dependance on a Triumph, of ſix Nights Suſpenſion, from Grimaces, and Obſcenity. — But, I leave the Reader to imagine my *Surprize*, when, at opening the Lobby Door, I ſaw the *Romans* in Poſſeſſion of the *Stage*; and *No Fewer*, than ELEVEN, *Engliſh*, *Spectators*, doing them *Honour*, from the *Boxes*!

METHOUGHT, I found myſelf amidſt the *Ruins*, of *Palmyra*, *in the Deſart*; in a ſolemn, pompous VOID; with here and there, a *broken Column*, an unburied *Pediment*, or tottering *Arch*, in Proſpect; to remind me, that, tho' over-run with *Weeds*, and neſted-in, by *Inſects*, This Empty Scene of Deſolation, Horrid, as it now appear'd, had, *heretofore*, been grac'd with *Majeſty*, and envied for its *Elegance*.

AT firſt, I bluſh'd, with *Pity*; for I partook the Diſappointment of the Gentleman, whoſe Honeſt Heart miſled him into ſuch an *over-rating* of his Country's *Genius*, as to think it poſſible, *Quadrille* cou'd ſpare him *Women*, to ſupport *forgotten Sentiments*: — But This *ſoft* Senſation of my Heart, gave way, in a few Moments, to Diſdain, and Indignation; till I was beginning to wiſh myſelf *No Engliſhman*; or, that my Birth had been delay'd, about *two Hundred Years*; by which Time, from an Exact, and arithmetical Calculation, I have found it *poſſible*, by Help of *Accidents*, and COURT EXAMPLES, that our Poſterity may be brought about, to Clap, at a *Strong Sentiment*, and liſten, without Yawning, to the Beſt-touch'd Scene of a Tragedy.

IN the mean Time, let us be ſatisfied, as well as we can, with the *Monſieurs*, and the *Mademoiſelles*, who have been *tranſported*, for Improvement of our Underſtanding. — The Redundant Choler of

of our active Neighbours has, at all Times, been *evacuated* upon us, for our wiſh'd Refinement, and due Poliſhing: But, of late Years, eſpecially, it has been more than ordinarily ſucceſsful! Their *mimic* Influence has quicken'd even the Dulleſt of our *Blockheads*, into the *Vivacity* of *Monkeys*; and we have, among our Perſons of *Condition*, ſome *Great Genii*, who, with Abatement for ſhort Necks, thick Shoulders, and a Grain of *National Weight*, in their *Clumſineſs*, wear their Cloaths as *well-lac'd*, and as *ſurprizingly cut*, as the moſt ſpirited Coxcomb at *Paris*.

In good Truth, if I had not been a *Reader* of *Hiſtory*, I ſhou'd have run myſelf into a *Blunder*, and loſt Time, ridiculouſly, in *miſ-prompting* ſome *Miniſter of State* to take Theſe Things into Conſideration. I ſhou'd fooliſhly have put him in mind, that *Cardinal Richelieu* was [within an *Ace*] as wiſe as *Himſelf*, and, yet, reform'd, and eſtabliſh'd, the *Tragic Theatre*, in the Midſt of a *Nation* of *Pigtails*. — I ſhou'd have talk'd wildly about *Greeks*, and invited People out of their Road, who have quite *other Affairs* to concern themſelves about, than the *Miſtakes* of *my* Enthuſiaſm. — Nay I had probably drawn up ſome *Remonſtrance*, in the Name of the *Muſes*, and convey'd it into a Hand, that might have put it to a Uſe, too *Undignified* to deſerve Deſcription; if I had not been diverted from this Purpoſe, ſo gravely ſilly and unſeaſonable, by a moſt whimſical and ludicrous Accident.

As I was walking, near *Marybone-Fields*, by the Edge of one of thoſe *Publick Repoſitories*, where they ſtore up the *Spare-wealth*, of this abounding *Metropolis*, my *Noſe* took Alarm at the Fragrancy; and furniſhed my Fancy with a Notion, that it was a Uſe not *Unlike This*, to which the *French* have converted *our Theatres*. — I rambled into an Expanſion of this Thought, till I grew *comforted*, in the Revenge they have taken upon us, for our Contempt of their *Tragedies*, by ſuiting us with a *Set* of Fools, to our *Palate*. — But I was interrupted in my Cogitations, by the Approach of a Covey of Stragglers, from *Weſtminſter School*, with the Spirit of the Place in their Faces: — One of Theſe was preſſing an *Apple*, with his Left Hand, upon a Cow-keeper's Boy, they had met with; while he held conceal'd, in his Right, kept behind for that Purpoſe, a ſhort Piece of *Lathe*, enrich'd at one End, by the Spoils of the Lake it had newly been dipp'd in. — The profer'd Apple was rejected, with ſuſpicious, and averted Frownings; and, as often, *puſh'd* upon the *Refuſer*; who, at length, becoming impatient, under the too officious Civility, roar'd out, *I won't, I won't*, with a Mouth as Round as the *Apple*. — In That critical Moment, The perſiſting Benefactor produc'd the *Lathe*, from behind his Coat, and Drawing the *Fullneſs* of its *Treaſure* quite croſs the Proteſtor's Mouth, told him, *It was Every Man to his Palate*: — Bad Taſtes for That, and Good ones for Apples.

It is the eaſieſt Tranſition in the World, from a *School-Boy*, to a *School-Maſter*: And it will be but doing Juſtice to the Gentlemen of that uſeful Profeſſion, to derive from *Their* well-tim'd Influence, the ſmall Remainder of our Hope, that *Dramatic Poetry* will not be abſolutely *Extinguiſh'd*, in this Nation. — After having been forſaken by its *Natural Nurſes*, The auſpicious Charity of theſe *Good Chriſtians* has taken-in the Dying Infant; and the Practice they have introduc'd in Schools, of forming Boys to Manly Geſture and Conception, by inſtructing them to *Act* ſuch Plays, as they ſhou'd draw *Ideas* from, will tranſmit, perhaps, to a *ſucceeding* Age, a *Taſte*, which only this propitious Accident cou'd have enabled to ſurvive the *Preſent*.

But, to *diverſify*, the Subject, leſt it appear too *tedious*, under the Eye of our Readers of *High Taſte*, in the Neighbourhood of *St. James's*, there is nothing more worthy the Generoſity of an opulent People, than the Cuſtom we are already ſo famous for, of Building and Endowing *Hoſpitals*, aſſign'd to an infinite Variety of Charitable Purpoſes. — We have *Two*, of diſtinguiſh'd Eminence, which approach, in ſome ſmall Degree, toward-the Uſe I revolve in my Thoughts: I mean *Bedlam*, and its new Wing, for the *Eaſe* of *Incurables*.

This Laſt, in its Inſtitution, has ſomething infinitely Humane and Generous. Former Ages were contented with Endeavours to *Recover Health*; and, failing in That Purpoſe, contributed no Care at all to the *ſoftening* a confirm'd *Deſpair*, and making Life, which they cou'd not *Bleſs*, at leaſt *ſupportable*, in its *Miſery*. — Taking Example from this happy Plan, I raiſe my *Compaſſion*, above *groveling* Objects, and wou'd point it to the Benefit of the *Diſtreſſed* in *Exalted* Life, the *unhappy* People of *Quality*.

If the Managers of our Theatres wou'd let any thing *run* in their Heads, but their *Horſes*, They, who have been Oblig'd by ſo many bountiful *Subſcriptions*, wou'd now, in mere Gratitude, encourage *One*, in Behalf of their *Benefactors*: And, ſince Perſons of *Diſtinction*, muſt not be Entertain'd, like the *Mob*, and no Part of a Play-houſe is of Leſs *Uſe*, than the *Boxes*, they might lay out a little Money, for Wainſcoting them *off*, from the *Vulgar* Part of the Theatre, and turn them into ſeparate *Quadrille Rooms*, at no higher a Price than the *Play*, for the Entertainment of *Ladies* of *Faſhion*; upon whom it is too heavy an Impoſition, as Things ſtand at Preſent, to ſit ſtill, three Hours together, without *taking Share* of the *Treat*, tho' they part with more Money toward the Expence of it, than other People, whoſe *uncultivated* Palates, are *Coarſe* enough, to *taſte* what they *pay for*.

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